

Sockeye Salmon, Adams River

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In October, sockeye salmon return to the Adams River in British Columbia from the Pacific Ocean, where they spent their adult life.



These sockeye salmon were born in the Adams River four years ago, returning to spawn and then die.



These adult sockeye salmon were bright and silvery when they began swimming up the Fraser and Thompson Rivers, towards the Adams River.

During their seventeen day journey of 485 kilometers, their bodies turn crimson and their heads turn brownish-green.



The male sockeye salmon develop large, hooked jaws and prominent teeth to defend their spawning sites.



The sockeye salmon can be easily seen in the shallow gravel areas of the Adams River.



After reaching the Adams River, the female sockeye searches for a place to lay her eggs. The eggs must be laid in clean, coarse gravel in running water. She creates a pocket, a redd, in the gravel to deposit her eggs, turning on her side and fanning her tail to lift out gravel to make the pocket. The male sockeye fights off other males, and fertilizes the eggs that the female lays in the redd.



The paired sockeye spawn in successive redds made upstream several more times, and die within days.



The sockeye salmon start looking really ragged as the end draws near.



Dead salmon line the river banks, and float downstream continuously.

Every four years there is a dominant run of sockeye salmon in the Adams River, followed by three years of much less fish.

